State of the Art

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State of the Art

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Summary

It's safe to say Will Graham despises Hannibal Lecter the moment he meets him.

Notes

Day 12 of AU_Gust Prompts is: Crime

Come pretend with us that this is the appropriate way to break into a vault and enjoy some snarky, light angst with a happy ending!

See the end of the work for more notes

It’s safe to say Will Graham despises Hannibal Lecter the moment he meets him.

The man *clearly* comes from money, which, in and of itself, is enough to raise Will’s hackles; he’s never dealt well with the affluent, having come from so little himself. And while for him and his crew this trade is sometimes the only thing between them and utter poverty, Lecter treats the whole thing like a game. Worse yet, a *hobby.* Poor, rich, bored man, looking for anything to pique his interest between the endless operas and galas he no doubt attends with the rest of the upper crust.

He stares balefully at the man that blinks amicably back at him, waiting for this godforsaken debriefing to *start* already, so he can get the job and start working out the specs. He’s never done a job for Mason Verger before, but he’s come across the few that have, and he can’t say he’s surprised by the level of theatrics already involved. In all honesty, Will would have been happy being CC'd on a goddamn *email* over all this nonsense.

But a job’s a job, and a job for Verger may very well mean not having to work the rest of the year, so Will sits at the grand table, alternately glaring at the empty place setting before him and the man dressed to the nines across from him, waiting for his newest boss to grace them with his presence.

“Hannibal Lecter.”

Will’s concentration is pulled from the empty wine glass before him - as though staring at it hard enough would magically correct its lack of contents - to the man across from him sitting both formally and somehow *relaxed* in his own dining chair. When Will only raises an eyebrow at the man, his lips quirk into a tight smile and he continues.

“You’re Will Graham, aren’t you? Tech genius extraordinaire.”

Will stiffens at that; his mind has a tendency to lag toward outright paranoia at times, hence his desire to embed himself in any and every surveillance system on the planet, and this stranger having identifying knowledge of him from the get-go only raises red flags in his already anxious mind.

“How do you know who I am?”

Lecter smiles, a coy and knowing thing as his amber eyes glint mischievously. “I always make a habit of knowing exactly who I’m working with.”

Will scowls, the tension dropping from his frame as he slumps down in his seat. “I haven’t taken the job yet. We haven’t been *offered* the job yet.”

The tilt of his lips only pulls higher at Will’s combative response. “You don’t decide whether or not you’ll take a job from Mason Verger. The mere fact that you’re sitting at this table means you’re on his payroll. He’s not exactly the sort of man that would allow one to walk away after having gained intimate knowledge of his machinations.”

Will's stomach sours at that, anxiety rising within him like a swelling tsunami wave, ready to crash over and drown him completely.

"There's nothing to fret about," Lecter adds, perhaps having sensed the sudden shift in Will's mood. "Mason is surprisingly cordial, despite his reputation. And he rarely contracts out his dirty work to the likes of us. This may be a sensitive undertaking, but I doubt it will be anything too unpalatable."

Will mentally adds *intolerably confident* to his list of reasons to hate Hannibal Lecter, glances the man over once more and has just enough time to further add *ugly dresser* spitefully before the side door to the room swings open and they are no longer alone.

"Gentlemen!" Mason Verger crows as he strolls casually into the room, as though he's not just made the two of them wait for nearly fifteen minutes. "Thank you for joining me this evening. I hope you're both a fan of pork," he adds, gesturing to someone just through the door who, at his signal, wheels out a cart with an honest-to-God roasted suckling pig atop it, completely with the goddamn apple in its mouth and everything.

"Sure," Will shrugs, affecting an air of indifference as across the table from him Lecter nearly purrs, "More than you know."

Mason takes a seat with a flourish, his too-broad and aggressive smile showing teeth and sinking beneath Will's skin like a tumor. He's been in the man's presence for less than thirty seconds and he already finds him even more intolerable than Hannibal, Mason an entirely other sort of *wretched* that calls to mind a cancerous growth that feeds off its host until it leaves nothing but a husk behind.

He's heard rumors of Mason Verger, of course, but even Will in all his prowess has been unable to break into his all of his encryptions and fail safes and military operation level protections to find any real information. He's only here to help pay the bills for himself and his team, all of them experiencing hard times and in need of the massive payout Mason is promising.

Mason slaps his hands together, obscenely loud in the relative silence of the room, and Will cringes internally but manages to suppress a physical shudder. "So, let's eat and discuss business, shall we? Papa always said you should never conduct business hungry. Dig in."

"How difficult can it be to pick a fucking lock, Lecter?" Will nearly growls into the earpiece as he watches Hannibal simply *stand* in front of the vault they're trying to break into.

"I don't know, Will, how difficult can it be to turn off some security cameras?" Hannibal quips back, and Will can *see* the smarmy smile on his face even through the grainy image of the video.

He grits his teeth together to keep himself from saying what he *wants to say,* and instead takes several deep breaths before he replies. "You mean the state-of-the-art *government grade*

security system complete with cameras, audio, bio-sensors, and access control I just *rerouted* to get you inside? Not difficult at all."

Will rolls his eyes when Hannibal just laughs at that, and steps closer to the vault, pulling something from the bag slung over his shoulder. "Not every safe or vault is the same, just like not every security system is the same. Before I can get us inside I first need to understand her."

"Did you just call the vault *her?"* Will sighs, running his fingers through his hair more aggressively than is perhaps called for. He leans forward in the chair, though, as Hannibal *finally* approaches the vault, a small plasma torch in his hands now.

"You verified there's a temperature control system dedicated to this room only, correct?" Hannibal asks, and Will again has to bite his tongue. He's *done his job,* now it's time for Hannibal to put up *and* shut up.

"Yes, Lecter. It's currently disabled along with the rest of the central control systems for the entire building. For another -" He checks the watch on his wrist, they'd both synced their watches before they entered the building to make sure things went smoothly. Sometimes it was a matter of literal *microseconds* between being caught or staying free to thieve another day. "Seven minutes and twenty-three seconds."

"Wonderful, thank you dear Will." Everything the man says drips with flirtation and a suaveness only afforded to the very rich or very inept. Will can begrudgingly say Hannibal isn't the latter.

Still, Will misses *his* crew. The team he's amassed over the years is crucial to his success, and they function more like an extended family unit. He's unaccustomed to acclimating to a new process or someone else's specific ways, and it doesn't sit well with him to have so little control. But Mason had been clear and more than a little aggressive about refusing Will and Hannibal access to their usual team. He wanted the two of them alone, claiming he trusted no one - not even them - with the contents of the vault.

Hannibal turns on the plasma torch, and Will watches intently as the metal of the vault begins to sizzle and melt away. Hannibal claimed he wouldn't need to bore through the entire vault to reach the interior, and Will is curious as to why.

As though he can hear Will's thoughts, Lecter decides to narrate his actions. "The torch can reach temperatures of up to fifty-thousand degrees Fahrenheit, though we won't need it quite that hot. I simply need to heat the metal of the vault enough to set off the protection system for the temperature controls. Based on the style of vault and the isolated location of the temperature regulations system, we can assume the inside of the vault is temperature controlled and it should open the door automatically if it reaches a certain high or low inside to protect the contents from damage."

Will laughs, a sharp, surprising sound that's pulled from him. "So basically you just have to make it hot and it'll *open for you?* Talk about an easy fucking job."

Hannibal only hums in reply, and Will can almost imagine the prim, offended look on his stupidly handsome face. Price would have had something terribly lewd to come back at that with, some quip that would have the whole team trying to do their work through a pitch of laughter, and the absence of his snark only further drives home Will's loneliness.

He gets an alert on his burner phone and the screen draws his gaze away from Hannibal's work. He clicks on the screen with a gloved finger and quickly enters his code to unlock the phone. Scanning the alert he sees it's a new email notification for Mason. Will had managed to hack into his email a week ago after he'd made their payment in full *before the job even started.*

It wasn't unheard of, necessarily, for a wealthy enough client to pay up front, but it was rare enough that it set alarm bells off in Will's paranoid mind. He put his best hacker - Beverly Katz - on the job, and she'd managed to break into nearly all of his email accounts within half an hour.

The email Will reads through now is troubling, to say the least. "Hannibal, we have a problem."

Hannibal hums again in response, focused on his task at hand. When Will doesn't reply again, he looks up to the sole camera Will left functioning - albeit it routed so that no one else can see the feed - brow raised expectantly. "Will?"

Will jolts back to attention, eyes drawn from the email thread unfolding before his very eyes. "Jack Crawford just sent Verger an email. And Verger replied. We've been had; the whole thing was a set-up, meant to catch us out so they could take us in. You have to - you have to get out of there."

Hannibal's head tilts to the side as he considers this, the only indication he's heard Will at all. Most people would panic under the prospect of imminent arrest by the FBI, would show *some* emotion over just hearing they've been betrayed, set-up. Not Hannibal Lecter. Hannibal Lecter merely glances up to the camera once more after a moment of silent thought and says calmly, "If they know where I am, they know where you are."

Will has, of course, thought of that, but hearing it spoken out loud so blatantly makes his stomach twist sickly. "Yeah, likely."

"You have a better chance of getting out unscathed than I do," Hannibal points out, and then he turns back to *continue his work.*

"Leave the safe, dammit! There's no point!"

"We were hired for a job," Hannibal reminds him, giving a pleased hum when his theory proves correct and the vault door swings open with a heavy thud loud enough Will hears it through his earpiece.

Will stares at the feed incredulously as Hannibal disappears into the room. "No, we were *set up!"*

“You may not have experience with Mason Verger, Will, but I do,” Hannibal informs him. “We were paid for a job, and regardless of what other plans he might have made, he will expect that job to be completed,” Hannibal explains, casually repacking his work bag as though time is most notably *not* of the essence. “Though I understand your concern in regards to the FBI. You should abandon your post.”

Speech leaves Will for several heavy moments of utter silence before he finally blurts out, “What, leave you to get pinched on your own? What game are you playing, Lecter?”

“No game,” Hannibal intones, hoisting his bag over his shoulder once more and turning back to the camera. “Does my willingness to sacrifice myself distort the narrative you’ve created of how easy it is to hate me?”

“I don’t - hate you,” Will denies, his words trailing into a mumble when he’s suddenly startled to find they’re true. “You’re just...not like me. Look, this *really* isn’t the time for this conversation so - *shit!”* Will’s focus is jerked from the image of Hannibal standing placidly to another camera view in the corner of his screen. “We have movement at the north exit. You are *way* too close to them, Hannibal, you need to get moving *now.”*

“Tell me where to go.”

“Out the vault room and to the left, then your second right.”

“That leads to the west side of the building,” Hannibal points out, even as he follows Will’s directions. Will’s stomach twists and clenches every time Hannibal flashes in and out of his camera feeds.

“Yes.”

“There’s no exit on the west side of the building.”

Will snorts at that, as if he’d be so obvious, even if he *were* going to set Hannibal up. “Look at you, reading blueprints. There’s no *main* exit. But there *is* a service lift in the kitchens. Leads down to storage and right out to the back alley.”

“And what sort of guarantee do we have that they’ve not already surrounded the building.”

“None, really. But they don’t know we’ve cottoned on to them, they still think they’ll be taking us unawares. One more right off the end of that hall and you - stop, *stop.* There’s a security guard coming from the kitchen.” Will stares at the shape strolling down the hall. His entire demeanor is *business as usual,* which is odd considering the FBI is right in the middle of a goddamn raid on his building. “Go back down the way you came - *quietly.* There’s a room you can duck into until he passes by you.”

“Door’s locked, Will.”

“Yeah, no shit, you’re in the middle of a government building after hours. Aren’t you supposed to be some renowned lockpick or something? Jesus, a little critical thinking goes a long way, Hannibal.”

Will listens to the soft rustling of Hannibal digging in his bag as he stares at the camera feed. Hannibal's in a blind spot, so all he can do is watch the security guard amble closer, his heartbeat pounding faster with every step the unsuspecting man takes. "He's on you in twenty feet."

Hannibal doesn't respond, but Will thinks he can hear the quiet *clink* of metal meeting metal.

"Ten feet to the corner, he's not exactly taking his time, Hannibal!" Will hisses, his stomach clenching when the security guard reaches the corner and disappears around it. From the camera down the adjacent hall, Will can see the man halt as soon as he turns down Hannibal's corridor. "Shit, *shit.* Can you take him out before he raises the alarm? Hannibal? *Hannibal -"*

"There will be no need for that," Hannibal's voice breaks the deafening silence in Will's ear, and Will feels like he can breathe again. "I'm in."

Will peers closer at the feed and huffs a breathless, nervous laugh as he watches the guard finish tying his shoe and then stand from his crouched position. "Christ Almighty."

"Would you really advocate murder to see me safe, Will?" Hannibal's voice is a low whisper, but Will can still hear the amusement dripping from it. "Perhaps you don't hate me after all."

"Perhaps you shouldn't talk while a security guard walks right past your hiding spot," Will snaps. "And I didn't - I never said *kill* him."

Hannibal gives a hum at that. "I see. The phrase *take him out* must translate differently in Lithuania, then."

Will's cheeks flame at that and he stares stubbornly at the feeds on his monitor. "I changed my mind, I hate you," he grumbles. Hannibal's soft chuckle sounds in his ear, so close and intimate Will can almost feel warm breath spill against his skin. He very resolutely ignores the way the sound makes his stomach clench pleasantly and turns his attention to his watch. "Less than three minutes, Hannibal. Aaaand the FBI just realized you're not in the vault room. I've got eyes on the guard, get your ass to the kitchens *now."*

"You should probably begin worrying about your own safety, dear Will," Hannibal mutters. A moment later Will can see him come into view as he turns down the corridor to the kitchens.

Will chews his lips, considering that. He's not wrong, after all. The FBI will have realized Will's interference with the security systems isn't originating from inside the building; they'll be doing a sweep of the area soon enough, and he's a sitting duck if he doesn't find a way to shift with this new flow. "Alright. I'm gonna move the van. I'm *not leaving you.* Just - I'm not gonna have eyes for you for ninety seconds. You good?"

"Do what you need to do, Will. Entering the kitchen area now."

Will scrambles out of the back of the van and races around to the front, hopping into the driver's side and starting it up. "I'm moving around to that side of the building. With any luck I can snatch you right on your way into the alley."

It takes all of his self-control not to come tearing out of the alley he's parked in, barreling toward the building currently being raided by the FBI. Pulling into traffic and coasting at the recommended thirty miles an hour feels like going at a snail's pace, so unlike the racing of his heart, and Will can't stop himself from glancing anxiously at the clock on his dashboard every ten seconds.

His left leg bounces nervously, his hand shaking when he pulls his wrist up to glance at his watch again. "Systems up in thirty-seven seconds, H. You need to get out that service door before it is."

He's never lost it on a job like this before, never let his nerves get the best of him. It's easy to pretend that's because he has years of good faith in his teammates, while working with Hannibal is still so *new.* So fragile, so easy for misunderstandings and mistrust. Approaching the building, he can see already that the FBI does indeed have it surrounded; he doesn't need visual confirmation that they've likely also covered the door he just instructed Hannibal to exit from.

Will curses under his breath and breezes by the entrance to the western alley, careful to maintain his speed as he scopes out the area. "I can't get down the alley. I'm going two blocks further west to park; hopefully they haven't scoped out that far. Hannibal, they're - they might be outside when you get down."

No response. Will glances at his wrist just as the countdown reaches zero and begins to trill an alarm. "Hannibal? *Hannibal."*

Will swerves into the alley he'd indicated, driving faster than advisable until he's nearly halfway down it and then throws the van in park. He tears out of the driver's seat and around to the back, climbing in and frantically working to pull up outside camera feeds surrounding the facility. "Hannibal," he tries again, attributing the tremble in his voice to the rush of adrenaline flooding his system. "Hannibal, are you out? *Fuck!"*

His fingers fly over his keyboard, breath catching as the surrounding cameras fall prey to his attack and loop their feed on his monitor. There are easily half a dozen agents guarding the two main exits, with more still inside, Will is sure. He sees the moment they've been given the order to fan out, stalking out away from the building into the surrounding area. He needs to get eyes on his own alley, see how close they might venture -

Will's stomach drops as the back doors to his van are wrenched open, his entire body frozen in fear for a breath before instinct takes over and he raises his hands above his head. He stares the agent down, wondering if Hannibal was taken just as easily, or if he put up a fight. If he resisted arrest, they would have reasonable justification to *hurt* him, and the thought makes Will's stomach sour.

He's confused for a moment when the agent doesn't point a gun at him, doesn't order him to step out of the van slowly, get down on the ground. Instead, he drops Hannibal's black duffel onto the floor of the van between them, and then reaches up to remove his helmet -

"Surrender so quickly, Will? I'd have thought you'd have more fight than that," Hannibal demures, shucking out of the navy blue windbreaker emblazoned with the letters FBI in

reflective white.

“Why the *fuck* didn’t you answer me? How the *fuck* did you get your hands on that get-up?”

“There was indeed an agent in the alley when I exited, but just one. I was able to subdue him and slip away before the others arrived. I’m afraid I lost my earpiece in all the excitement.”

“You idiot!” Will is on him in seconds, pushing him against the side of the van and kissing him with enough force that their teeth clack together and he tastes copper in his mouth. He doesn’t care, keeps Hannibal held in place as he attacks his lips.

When he finally pulls away, a little breathless and more than a little ruffled, Hannibal looks dazed but recovers quickly, a stupid smirk turning his lips up at the corners.

“Does this mean you’ll let me *take you out,* Will? Have I used that phrase correctly?”

Will doesn’t say anything in reply, just blinks at him and punches him in the chest, Hannibal huffing harshly. He pulls his eyes away from Hannibal’s gaze, looking anywhere but at his face. He notices an explosive charge in the other man’s hand and flicks his eyes back to mirthful amber. “What’s that?”

“That, dear Will, is an explosive. Most commonly used to - as the laymen say - blow things up.” Hannibal’s voice is thick with contentment and he looks every inch like the cat that got the cream *and* the canary.

“I fucking know what it is, Hannibal. Why do you have it?”

“I imagine it will be easier to remove all evidence and send a fairly bold message to all those involved in our attempted capture if we simply destroy the entire van. Are you opposed?” Hannibal raises a brow, already working to stick the charge to the inside of the van wall.

“I guess not,” Will grumbles, jumping out of the van and looking around at their prospects for an escape vehicle. He can hot wire anything, so it’s not a matter of ability, simply a matter of what will be the most inconspicuous.

He finds an older model Honda, not too old but old enough not to be flashy, white in color. It’ll blend in with other cars in the area, so he nods to himself and stomps over to the vehicle, using a blade in his pocket to pop open the door when he finds it locked.

He has the car purring quietly within seconds, and hops inside, pulling it around to the van. “Going my way?” He teases, happy to see that his return flirtations fluster the other man just as much as Will feels overwhelmed.

“I suppose so.” Hannibal grins, climbing into the passenger side and buckling up. *So proper.* Will doesn’t keep himself from rolling his eyes this time, but he’s smiling nonetheless.

“We’ll need to have a word with Mister Verger. It was terribly rude of him to get the FBI involved.”

“Probably a sweetheart deal of some sort. Mason’s clearly into some shit; it took my best hacker to get into his email accounts and she still hasn’t managed to bypass the rest of his security. He’s hiding something.”

“Aren’t you curious to know what?”

“I suppose so,” Will quips, leaning back in the seat and turning the music up as they cruise out of the alley, the sound and vibration of an explosion rattling the car seconds later.

End Notes

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We also have a Discord server where you can chat with us, throw us prompts, and post images/art inspired by our work! You may also catch a snippet or two of some WIPs! DM us on Twitter for details!

'Til next time! 💚 💜 BellaRai

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